

Message Text

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15

ACTION ORM-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8435

INFO CINCPAC

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 15156

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, LA, TH

SUBJ: UNHCR PROGRAM FOR THAILAND

SUMMARY: UNHCR OFFICIALS JAEGER AND RIZVI TOLD THE AMBASSADOR JULY 23 THAT THEY BELIEVE THE RTG WILL MAKE ITS DECISION ON THE UNHCR PROGRAM FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES AT THE JULY 29 CABINET MEETING. THE COST OF THE PROGRAM WILL BE HIGHER THAN THE 6.6 MILLION ORIGINALLY ESTIMATED IN WASHINGTON. WHILE UNHCR APPEARS WILLING TO GO AHEAD WITH THE 500,000 DOLLARS IT NOW HAS, THIS WILL PROBABLY LAST FOR ONLY ONE MONTH. THE USG IS THE ONLY MAJOR SOURCE OF FUNDS FOR A LONG TERM RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

1. UNHCR REPRESENTATIVES JAEGER AND RIZVI CALLED ON THE AMBASSADOR JULY 23. THEY WERE ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR REPRESENTATIVES FROM BANGKOK AND VIENTIANE. JAEGER AND RIZVI REPORTED THAT THEY ARE CLOSE TO AGREEMENT WITH THE RTG ON A PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE TO INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. THE RTG
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WILL PREPARE A REPORT FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE JULY 29 CABINET

MEETING AND A DECISION TO GO AHEAD COULD BE MADE AT THE MEETING. JAEGER AND RIZVI SAID THAT THE MAJOR PROBLEM NOW IS FUNDING. THE BUDGET PREPARED BY THE RTG IS MUCH HIGHER THAN HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED, AND THE 500,000 DOLLARS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE WILL LAST FOR ONLY ABOUT ONE MONTH. IT APPEARS THAT THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATE OF 6.6 MILLION DOLLARS, WHICH WAS ARRIVED AT BY UNHCR AND USG OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON, IS MUCH TOO LOW. RIZVI NOTED THAT THE BUDGET SUBMITTED BY THE RTG CONTAINED SUCH ITEMS AS CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING AND IN EFFECT IS A PLAN FOR PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT. FOR POLITICAL REASONS, HOWEVER, THE RTG STILL TALKS ONLY OF TEMPORARY RESETTLEMENT. RIZVI ADDED THAT FOR THIS TYPE OF PROGRAM THE USG WILL BE THE ONLY MAJOR SOURCE OF FUNDS.

2. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT HE BELIEVED THE USG IS PREPARED TO BE OF ASSISTANCE TO UNHCR IN FUNDING THE PROGRAM, ESPECIALLY IF UNHCR DEMONSTRATES IT CAN DO THE JOB. HE SUGGESTED THE 500,000 DOLLARS NOW AVAILABLE BE PUT INTO THE PROGRAM AS SOON AS THE RTG AGREED. JAEGER SAID UNHCR IS WILLING TO START THE PROGRAM AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT THE PROPOSED THAI FIGURES OF 40-50 CENTS PER DAY PER REFUGEE SEEMED TOO LOW TO MAINTAIN A PROPER DIET AND SUGGESTED THAT IN PREPARING ITS BUDGET, UNHCR ALSO INCLUDE ITS OWN BEST ESTIMATE ON HOW MUCH SHOULD BE ALLOCATED FOR FOOD. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO SAID ELABORATE PLANS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING, ESPECIALLY FOR THE MEO, SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED. INSTEAD THE MEO SHOULD BE GIVEN BASIC MATERIAL ASSISTANCE AND ALLOWED TO CONSTRUCT THEIR TRADITIONAL HOMES.

3. RIZVI SAID MUCH MORE WORK WAS NEEDED ON THE BUDGET. HE ADDED THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO PLAN A LONG TERM BUDGET AT THIS TIME. HE SAID HE HOPED WASHINGTON WOULD ALLOW UNHCR TO OPERATE FOR ABOUT SIX MONTHS BEFORE AN ACCURATE ESTIMATE ON THE TOTAL SCOPE OF THE PROGRAM WOULD BE REQUIRED.

4. THE UNHCR LAOS REPRESENTATIVE NOTED THE RETURN OF SOME 70 MEO TO LAOS. HE SAID THAT THEY WERE BEING TREATED EXTREMELY WELL AND HOPED THAT AS A RESULT LARGE NUMBERS WOULD DECIDE TO RETURN. IF THIS HAPPENED, HE SAID UNHCR WANTED TO PLAN A LARGE SCALE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM IN LAOS.

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5. JAEGER SAID HE ATTENDED A MEETING OF THE ICRC, THAI RED CROSS, ICEM, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON JULY 22. IT WAS DECIDED AT THE MEETING THAT THE THAI RED CROSS WOULD ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR COORDINATION OF

THE VOLAG EFFORT IN THAILAND. JAEGER SAID THE VOLAGS COULD SUPPLEMENT THE ROLE PLAYED BY UNHCR BY PROVIDING

SPECIALIZED ASSISTANCE NOT INCLUDED IN THE BASIC THAI/UNHCR AGREEMENT.

7. JAEGER ALSO NOTED THAT UNHCR WOULD PLAN TO HAVE STAFF WHO WOULD ACTIVELY MONITOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFUGEE PROGRAM IN THE FIELD.

8. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE ARE STILL DETAILS TO BE WORKED OUT, IT APPEARS THAT UNHCR AND THE RTG ARE NEAR AGREEMENT. USG FUNDS WILL BE NEEDED IF THE PROGRAM IS TO GO AHEAD. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS UNHCR AND THE RTG TO MOVE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO START THE PROGRAM. JAEGER'S APPARENT WILLINGNESS TO START WITH THE FUNDS NOW AVAILABLE IS AN ENCOURAGING SIGN.

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